

Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee

Summary Minutes

March 21, 2006

In Attendance: Pat Blakemore, Annette Bourbonnierre, Stephen Bowers, Joan D'Agostino, Aleatha Dickerson, Jon Dupre, Vicki Ferrara, Steve Florio, Elaina Goldstein, Dianne Kayala, James Litwak, Eileen Naughton, Kathleen Partington, Cynthia Tyler

Guest: James de Boer

Staff: Keally DeWitt, Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Valerie Shore, Nancy Wooten

- **Minutes from the 9/20/05 and 11/15/05 meetings were approved.**
- **The discussion of Jonesco Design (item on today's agenda) will be tabled for a future meeting as JR Neville Songwe is unable to attend.**

Current Workgroup Updates

Diversity Workgroup

- **The final Workgroup meeting will be held on March 28th . An overview of the Workgroup's findings will be presented at the May Steering Committee meeting.**

Youth in Transition Workgroup

- **Copies of the YIT Interview booklet have been requested by ORS. The next meeting is May 30th.**

Housing Workgroup

- **Workgroup members and staff have been providing support for a Home Modification bond. Valuable input has also come from the Governor's Commission and AARP. An effort is being made to merge the Housing Works 75 million dollar bond bill with the Home Modification bond bill so both are not on the same ballot. The next Workgroup meeting is May 23rd.**

Health Care Workgroup

- **The Health Care Workgroup meeting took place on March 15. Representatives include all of the state's insurers, consumers, advocacy groups, health care professionals, etc. Short and long-term goals are being identified. The Workgroup wants to be involved with relevant legislative issues. The next meeting is April 26th.**

BLN Update: EEOC April 5th Breakfast Event

- **The BLN website is under construction.**
- **The deadline for registering for the April 5th EEOC Mediation event is coming up soon. SC members were urged to help get the word out.**

Resource Directory: Update and Discussion

- **Rhodes to Independence worked to update the accessibility part of the website.**
- **The RTI Steering Committee has been asked to provide input into the name of the website. The name must be catchy to attract consumers to the site.**
- **The SC was asked to narrow down the choices to 3. After input from SC members, the following were determined the best names: Ocean State Access on Line (or RI Access on Line); Ask Rhody (or Access Rhody); Access Answers RI.**

RI Disability Vote Project: Overview

- **Rhodes To Independence is a founding member (along with the Governor's Commission and the Disability Law Center). James De Boer is a 2005 graduate of Brown University and has been hired as the Project's Coordinator.**
- **James emphasized the importance of people with disabilities voting. The Project is dealing with barriers to voting such as lack of accessibility, discrimination at the polls, problems with getting to the polls.**
- **Participants in the project include "disability interests" organizations, families, consumers, service providers, etc. Information will be disseminated that will give voters background on the candidates and issues, on government, on the differences between elections (e.g., primary vs. general, how to get to the polls, etc). This is a non-partisan process – there is no endorsement of specific candidates.**

The Sherlock Plan: Outreach Activities

- **A Sherlock Plan Fact Sheet has been developed. In two weeks, DHS will be sending this and a letter to targeted potentially eligible individuals.**
- **Elaina gave a presentation to PARI on the Sherlock Plan. This is an excellent way to get accurate information on the Buy-In into the community and other organizations and groups are welcome to request a presentation.**
- **In addition, a triage process is in place. Keally DeWitt will be the screening point person in the RTI office. Many eligible individuals are on FLEX and these have a DHS worker who they can go to for information. Benefit specialists are also resources.**
- **It was pointed out that many individuals with mental illness in RI get services from mental health centers so, unlike the high proportion of this population who are in other states' Buy-Ins, it is unlikely that many of these people will switch to the Sherlock Plan (due to the premiums)**

Other Business / Next Steps

- **Since there has been a problem obtaining the larger DLT conference room (Room 73) staff will be looking into a backup meeting room.**
- **The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 16th 2:30 pm – 4 pm, location to be determined.**